

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1249

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, March 30, 2001

Title: An act relating to the quality of foster care services.

Brief Description: Regarding the quality of foster care services.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Ballasiotes, Tokuda, Dickerson, Gombosky, Darneille, Morell, Anderson, Schual-Berke, Esser, McIntire, Doumit, Kenney, Clements, Edwards, Fromhold, Miloscia, Barlean, Talcott, Ruderman, Conway, Kessler, Ogden, Lovick, D. Schmidt, O'Brien, Edmonds, Wood and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 3/30/01 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Joan Mell (786-7447)

Background: The Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) served over 19,000 children in out-of-home care during fiscal year 2000. Over 6,300 licensed foster homes were available to serve the majority of these children.

A 1999 Foster Care Task Force identified a number of priorities for improving the foster care system. Foster care rates, assessments for children entering foster care, and foster parent recruitment and retention were identified as priorities for immediate action. Restructured rates are being implemented and assessment improvement efforts are underway. Recruitment and retention efforts are ongoing.

Some child welfare practitioners and advocates support accreditation as a means to promote some of the foster care system improvements identified as priorities by the task force, and other system improvements. Accreditation involves self-evaluation and evaluation by an outside entity against performance standards developed nationally.

Summary of Amended Bill: Children's Administration at the Department of Social and Health Services must achieve full accreditation of all field offices and the administrative office by January 30, 2008, within available resources.

All private child-placing agencies must be fully accredited by January 30, 2008, prior to contracting with the department.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Senate language regarding accreditation is adopted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Department of Social and Health Services supports the legislation. Accreditation has improved relationships between caseworkers and foster parents. Children's Home Society supports accreditation and believes relationships improve as does performance. Reduced caseloads makes a difference for foster children, who are given a chance to connect with his or her caseworker.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Sharon Osborne, Children's Home Society; Tiffany Fenster, adopted child; Rosie Oreskovich, DSHS Children's Administration; Peggy Carlson, Foster Parent Association;